CIRCULATION COPY 1

Secretary Laird Gets Standing Ovation After "Rap" With Youth. (See Story On Page Three)

(DoD Photos by PHC Thomas J. Mackesy USN)

COMMANDERS DIGEST

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Air Search And Rescues To Continue

No U.S. Ground Combat Troops Operating In Laos

There are no American ground combat troops operating in Laos. But there are American military personnel flying missions in helicopters and fixed wing aircraft over Laos as well as search and rescue personnel that go in to pick up downed flyers, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said Feb. 12.

At a news conference prior to addressing the Rotary Club of Phoenix, Ariz., Secretary Laird said that as long as he is Secretary of Defense he will continue to authorize search and rescue missions for downed pilots and downed crewmen in Laos.

". . . this is perfectly consistent not only with the Amendment of the United States Senate, approved by the House on Military Sales Bill, but is also consistent with the Stennis-Mahon Amendment on the Appropriations Act," he said.

In addition, he said, "as a former Member of Congress, I can assure you that we will abide not only by the letter of the law but we will abide by the intent of the law because we recognize that Congress is a co-equal branch of our Government."

Laos Situation Is Different

The situation in Laos is different than in Cambodia, the Secretary said, adding ". . . I think it would not be realistic to assess them together.

"In Laos," he noted, "we are dealing with a territory which has been occupied by the enemy for several years; it is occupied enemy territory under the Communists and the North Vietnamese.

"In the Cambodian situation, we have a much different situation . . we have a country that is united in opposition to the North Vietnamese invaders and the North Vietnamese influence in that country.

"Even the investigators in the Senate

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Foreign Relations Committee," he continued, "came back with a report in which they gave an assessment that the vast majority of the people there—students, intellectuals, peasants, businessmen, military leaders — were all united in Cambodia for the Cambodian government to make a stand against the North Vietnamese invaders.

"They've built up a military force of 30,000 to over 200,000 in the period of six or seven months. It is the fastest growing army any place in the world, in the history of modern-day warfare.

"They are united to make a stand in Cambodia and thanks to an overwhelming vote in the United States Senate and House of Representatives, we have a Military Assistance Program of well over $200 million going forward there," Secretary Laird said.

Short Training Period

He stressed the training period had been so short for the Cambodians—115,000 to 200,000 only trained for as much as three weeks—that it will take some time for Cambodia to build a military defense that is needed and necessary in order to expel the foreign invaders in that country. But, he added, "they are making an all-out effort and the progress is good."

During his speech before the Rotary Club, Secretary Laird commented on the current South Vietnamese operation in areas of southern Laos occupied and used as a sanctuary area by the North Vietnamese invaders.

He said the operation—called "Lamson 719"—was undertaken by the Armed Forces of South Vietnam to disrupt the enemy flow of supplies and personnel into South Vietnam.

The United States in supporting "Lamson 719" with air and artillery from South Vietnam to enhance Vietnamization, so that more American troops can be brought home, and so those who remain will be subjected to lesser danger," he said.

"The action recently undertaken in enemy-occupied southern Laos is not, as some allege, a reversal of our policy of winding down the war, of essentially reducing American troop levels, of phasing out of combat and combat support activities in Southeast Asia," the Secretary asserted.

Will Shorten War

Secretary Laird said, to the contrary, it will shorten the war in the absence of a successful negotiated end to the conflict.

Explaining that the action against the enemy in enemy-held Laos is limited in three ways, Secretary Laird first pointed out how the ground forces are limited to South Vietnamese troops and that no American ground combat troops are being or will be used in Laos.

Second, he said (the operation) is limited to certain areas in the southern part of Laos which have been plainly under enemy control for years and which have been used for the storage of supplies and movement of North Vietnamese troops and supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia. Finally, he said, it is limited in time, as President (Nguyen Van) Thieu (President of the Republic of Vietnam) has said.

Explaining further, Secretary Laird said that to understand the current operation, there are a few "incontrovertible" facts about the tragic history of the tiny Kingdom of Laos that should be kept in mind:

—That, North Vietnam has occupied important areas of Laos continuously for more than a decade and has carried on a war of varying intensity against the Laotian people.

—That, North Vietnam has used the territory which it invaded and seized in southern Laos as one of its two routes of access to South Vietnam.

—That, with the loss of enemy sanctuary areas in Cambodia, the Ho Chi Minh Trail has become the only remaining major route by which North Vietnam sustains its military aggression against the South.

Gain Nation's Confidence

He said the progress made in Vietnamization and the strengthening and confidence of the Armed Forces of Republic of Vietnam have now made it possible for the civilian and military leadership of that nation to plan and carry out operations against enemy-occupied sanctuaries along its borders without participation by United States ground combat forces.

Secretary Laird told his audience that President Nixon "is winding the war down," and what is now being accomplished in Laos, he believes, "will speed the process."

But, he said, "this is not to say that the South Vietnamese will win every battle.

"There will undoubtedly be some temporary setbacks and we must anticipate the possibility of heavy fighting ahead by the ground forces of Vietnam," he continued. "But what I can tell you is that by May 1, we will have brought home an additional 50,000 Americans and more will follow them. The ending of American responsibility for ground combat operations that is approaching in Vietnam enables us to turn increasing attention toward the period beyond Vietnam," he said.

'Prayer Breakfasts' Observed Worldwide

Thousands of U.S. military personnel joined American civic and government officials throughout the world February 2 to observe the 19th annual National Prayer Breakfast.

Noting the increasing turnout for the Prayer Breakfast over the past several years, a Defense Department spokesman observed: "The annual Prayer Breakfast program seems to be gaining in momentum each year."

At many of the affairs, held at literally hundreds of military facilities, attendees listened to pre-recorded tape messages prepared by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird.

The President observed the occasion by breakfasting with government and military leaders at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C.

COMMANDERS DIGEST

THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS OFFICIAL INFORMATION, NEWS AND POLICY, DIRECT FROM WASHINGTON AUTHORIZED SOURCES.

Editor John R. German

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100 High School Youths 'Rap' With DoD Secretary

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird "rapped" with more than 100 select high school students—two from each State and the District of Columbia—at the Pentagon February 4, outlining for them some recent changes within the Department of Defense.

The gathering was part of the youths' participation in the ninth annual, week-long U.S. Senate Youth Program, a project to further the interest of high school student body leaders in political careers and government service.

"The most important change," the Secretary said, "has been in the manpower requirements of . . . . the Department of Defense as we plan for the national security of our country."

Mr. Laird noted that, following implementation of the Vietnamization program, "the American ground commitment, the American combat commitment, has been going down, down and down in Vietnam. . . . By the end of this fiscal year, we will have reduced American military presence by 320,000 men and women in Asia. We will have had six increments of troop withdrawals announced and met as far as Vietnam is concerned.

Running Concurrently

"Phase I, the turning over of ground combat responsibilities, will be completed this year," he said. "Phase II, turning over the air, artillery and logistics activities to the forces of South Vietnam is running concurrently but because of training as far as aircraft pilots, helicopter pilots, that particular part of the Vietnamization program takes a little longer because of the educational requirements; because of the training requirements that are needed and necessary in that area.

"Within the next 90 days," Mr. Laird stressed, "50,000 more American troops will be reduced and removed and withdrawn from South Vietnam.

"The most important item is the reduction in American casualties," he said. "We here in the Department of Defense will not be satisfied until American casualties reach zero, but American casualties have been reduced greatly during this period of time." The Secretary contrasted casualties as high as 500 per week "not too long ago," saying that "we are now averaging less than 50 casualties a week and every effort is being made to reduce those casualties to zero."

Tremendous Effect

Mr. Laird said that Vietnamization has had "a tremendous effect upon the overall manpower program in the Department of Defense. . . . With the presentation of the (Fiscal Year 1972) budget, we will have reduced American military manpower by over one million, and this is a part of our program to reduce draft calls by July 1 of 1973, to zero."

An All-Volunteer Force, said Mr. Laird, "requires certain actions, of course, by the Congress and certain support as far as the American public is concerned. First, we need support to bring military pay scales in our starting levels up to compete with other sections in our society on the manpower market.

Asked For Pay Increase

"I went to the Congress this last week and recommended that the pay scales be increased by at least 50 per cent in that bottom enlistment grade so that we can be in a position to move in the direction of zero draft calls.

"It isn't just a question, however," he continued, "of pay and allowances as far as the attractiveness of military service is concerned; there are the educational benefits, the housing problems and many other problems that need to be corrected and we are working in that area.

The Secretary then entered into a brief question-and-answer session with the students. Asked how the Defense Department stood on strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) with our nuclear bombers and missiles near Russian soil, Mr. Laird replied:

"The only defense sites which we have are in connection with the NATO alliance. These are comparable to the deployments that the Soviet Union has made in the Warsaw Pact countries. . . . We're willing [to go] along with our NATO allies to discuss those particular subjects. But I do not believe that the proper forum is the SALT talks which should be limited to the strategic weapons."

One student asked Mr. Laird to what extent he believed the news media has

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If the congregation can't get to the Chaplain, then the Chaplain. . . . Here, a U.S. Navy Chaplain is lowered to the deck of an escort destroyer from a UH-2C Seasprite helicopter. After conducting religious services on the destroyer, the Chaplain returned to his assigned ship—in this case, the carrier USS Oriskany—again by helicopter.

—Chaplains Serve Nation's Servicemen Worldwide—

For the military man with a problem, after seeing the commander, discussing the situation with the executive officer, consulting with the doctor, counseling with the staff advocate or corresponding home, there is always one last resort—the Chaplain.

Military Chaplains have been a small but vital part of American armed forces since the birth of our Nation. Throughout our history, they have accompanied U.S. servicemen, in war and peace, wherever in the world they were needed.

Quietly and unobtrusively they have gone and still go—about their work of providing religious comfort and service to their congregations, as illustrated in these photographs recently released by the U.S. Navy Chaplains Corps, which recently observed its 195th anniversary.

(U.S. Navy Photos)

All religious faiths practice charity toward the needy; military Chaplains practice charity with earnest. Here a Navy Chaplain presents one of a number of packages of clothing and welfare goods, donated by a senior citizens club in the United States, to a Vietnamese family living in a refugee center operated by the Catholic Relief Society.

Traditional religious holiday observances for military personnel are usually planned by a Chaplain of the appropriate faith. Jewish sailors are led in a Sedar ritual by a Rabbi on board the aircraft carrier USS Kearsarge.

On the mess deck of a destroyer cruising the waters off Vietnam, a Catholic Chaplain administers the Sacraments of the Catholic Church to men of that faith.

Sometimes Chaplains must conduct services with only the barest of necessities. A Chaplain leads a group of servicemen in Vietnam, with only the sky for a cathedral.

General Elections Slated In Six States, D.C.

Although 1971 is considered an "off year" for elections, several States are having State-wide elections.

The chart below shows the offices to be filled in the various States and the District of Columbia during 1971. A brief summary of the procedure for absentee voting by members of the military services is also shown.

If questions should arise on procedures, contact the unit voting officer for more complete information. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76, may be obtained from the unit voting officer.

Many of the States not listed are holding elections for municipal, city, and/or county offices only.

Information about these elections may be obtained by writing to the County Clerk, county of residence.

STATES WITH STATEWIDE ELECTIONS IN 1971

(Current as of February 8, 1971)

STATE	ELECTION DATES	OFFICES TO BE FILLED	FOR ABSENTEE VOTING
KENTUCKY	Primary May 25 General Nov. 2	Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Attorney General, State Auditor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Clerk of the Court of Appeals, State Senators, and State Representatives.	*Contact*: County Clerk, county of residence. *Register:* 20 days before election. *Request Ballot:* Not later that 20 days before election. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls before they close.
LOUISIANA	1st Primary Nov. 6 2d Primary Dec. 18 General Feb. 1, 1972	Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Treasurer, Comptroller, State Supt. of Public Education, Register of State Land Office, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commission of Insurance, State Custodian of Voting Machines.	*Contact:* Clerk of District Court, Parish of residence. *Register:* At least 30 days before election. *Request Ballot*: Between 60 days and 7 days before election. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls by election day.
MISSISSIPPI	Preferential Election Oct. 12 General Nov. 2	Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Treasurer, Auditor of Public Accounts, Supt. of Public Education, Commissioner of Agriculture & Commerce, Commissioner of Insurance, Land Commissioner, Supreme Court Clerk, Highway Commissioners (3), Public Service Commissioners (3), District Attorneys, State Senators, State Representatives, County Prosecuting Attorneys, Sheriffs, in some counties Tax Collector, Chancery Clerks, Circuit Clerks, County Supts. of Public Education, County Tax Assessors (Tax Collector), Coroners and Rangers, County Surveyors, Members of Boards of Supervisors, Justices of Peace, Constables.	*Contact:* Clerk of District Court, parish of residence. *Register:* 4 months before election. *Request Ballot:* 60 days before Primary; 30 days before General. Note: Only one application needed for all elections in any year. *Voted Ballot*: Must be received by canvass day (day of final official count of ballots).

STATE	ELECTION DATES	OFFICES TO BE FILLED	FOR ABSENTEE VOTING
NEW JERSEY	Primary June 8 General Nov. 2	40 members of State Senate, 80 members of General Assembly. Vacancy in Senate District 4B: Special Primary on Feb. 16; Special General Election on March 2.	*Contact:* County Clerk, county of residence. *Register:* Military service voters not required to register; all others must register in person. *Request Ballot:* Anytime before election. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls on or before election day.
PENNSYLVANIA	Primary May 18 General Nov. 2	Justice of the Supreme Court (2).	*Contact:* County Clerk, county residence. *Register*: Military service voters not required to register; others may register by mail before election. *Request Ballot:* Anytime before election. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls by the Friday preceding election.
VIRGINIA	Primary— Democratic June 8 Republicans nominated by convention. General Nov. 2	Members of the General Assembly, County Constitutional Officers, Sheriffs, Attorney for the Commonwealth, Commissioner of Revenue, and Treasurer.	*Contact:* County Clerk, county of residence. *Register:* Military service voters not required to register; others must register in person. *Request Ballot*: At any time before election for military service voters; others between 90 and 10 days before election. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls on or before election day.
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	General March 23 General Nov. 2	For Delegate to House of Representatives. For Members of the District of Columbia Board of Education.	*Contact:* Board of Elections, District of Columbia, 20004. *Register:* At least 45 days before election; up to 30 days before election in person. *Request Ballot:* If permanently registered, 15 days before election; if registration is temporary by FPCA, absentee ballot will be sent automatically. *Voted Ballot:* Must reach polls on day of election.

If there are any questions on how to register, request ballot, or return ballot, contact the unit voting officer.

Defense Outlines Policy On PW/MIA For Commanders

In line with the continuing and mounting national concern over the plight of U.S. servicemen captured and missing in action in Southeast Asia, the Department of Defense recently provided this guidance:

Commanders are authorized to assist such efforts, including those of PW/MIA family groups, provided the assistance is within the bounds of existing directives.

Petitions on the PW/MIA issue may be circulated on military installations if deemed appropriate by the installation commander. It should be considered inappropriate to combine with a petition for the humane treatment and release of PW/MIA personnel other comments or petitions regarding United States policy, foreign or domestic.

A military man may express his opinion to a foreign government on the PW/MIA issue and use his military rank or title. Individuals should restrict the content of letters to the issues of humane treatment and release of PWs by the enemy and compliance with other provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1949—and avoid political comment.

Commanders are advised that some Vietnamese translations being circulated as letters and petitions in the American PW/MIA issue have been found to be in good taste and suitable for use. Others, however, have been reported to contain insulting words, phrases, and obscenities.

Persons signing letters and petitions addressing the plight of American PW/MIA's in SEA are urged to sign an English text only. Unless the individual has personal knowledge that a translation is appropriate and contains nothing that would destroy any value the letter might have as an expression of concern by individual American citizens, signing Vietnamese text is not recommended.

Youths 'Rap' With Mr. Laird

(Continued From Page Three)

exaggerated our involvement in Cambodia. He replied:

"There have been some indications that the United States is involved in Cambodia in military ground combat. I can assure all of you that there are no military ground combat forces operating in Cambodia or Laos.

Serve Country

"There is also the need . . . to have the respect and the understanding that is so needed of the service that's being performed by the men and women of our military services as they serve their country to meet the national security requirements which this country has in order to maintain and live up to the treaty obligations which we have entered into and have been confirmed under Constitutional provisions by our United States Senate. . . . There must be a better understanding of this kind of contribution that is made by the men and women of our military services and we must have the kind of respect, the kind of admiration which is needed and necessary, in order to attract young people."

Mr. Laird said: "We must have freedom to recruit on our college campuses just like any other segment of our society can recruit on our college campuses. Many of the people that are against Selective Service are also against the freedom to recruit for volunteer service on college campuses. These two positions are certainly not consistent and so we do need the kind of understanding for the military service that does not exist in some quarters as far as our country is concerned at the present time.

"At the present time," he continued, "we have in Cambodia on permanent assignment some 16 members of the military equipment delivery team who are auditing the delivery of over $200 million worth of equipment approved by the Congress of the United States . . ."

Another student commented that "perhaps one of the reasons some Americans don't have confidence in the Defense Department is because they feel the Defense Department has not been placing confidence in them, and in confidence in willing to give them information . . . so they can see what is going on."

More Information

"We're giving out more information about our activities in Southeast Asia than at any time in the history of any American involvement in combat, any place in the world," Mr. Laird replied. "We will continue to give out as much information as we possibly can."

The Senate Youth Program, funded by a grant from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, allows each delegate to view government in operation. In addition to the all-expense paid trip to Washington, each delegate is entitled to receive a $1,000 Hearst Foundation college scholarship.

Besides meeting with Secretary Laird, the students were also briefed by officials at the Departments of State and Justice, the Supreme Court and met with other legislative and government leaders.

Navy To Honor Black Aviator

The U.S. Navy will name a destroyer escort in honor of Jesse L. Brown, the first black naval aviator, Navy Secretary John H. Chafee has announced. The keel will be laid at Avondale Shipyards, Westwego, La., April 9.

Ensign Jesse LeRoy Brown was the first black American naval officer to lose his life in combat in the Korean Conflict. He was killed in action December 5, 1950, and posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Secretary Chafee said, "It is particularly fitting that we honor the memory of this distinguished Navyman during Negro History Week."

Ensign Brown was born October 13, 1926, in Hattiesburg, Miss., and enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1946. He accepted an appointment as a midshipman in the United States Navy in 1947.

The ship will be 438 feet long, 47 feet at the beam, displace 4,100 tons and be designed for locating and destroying enemy submarines.

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